MARVEL COMICS
THE NEW MUTANTS:
TRUTH or DEATH 3 of 3
JAN #3
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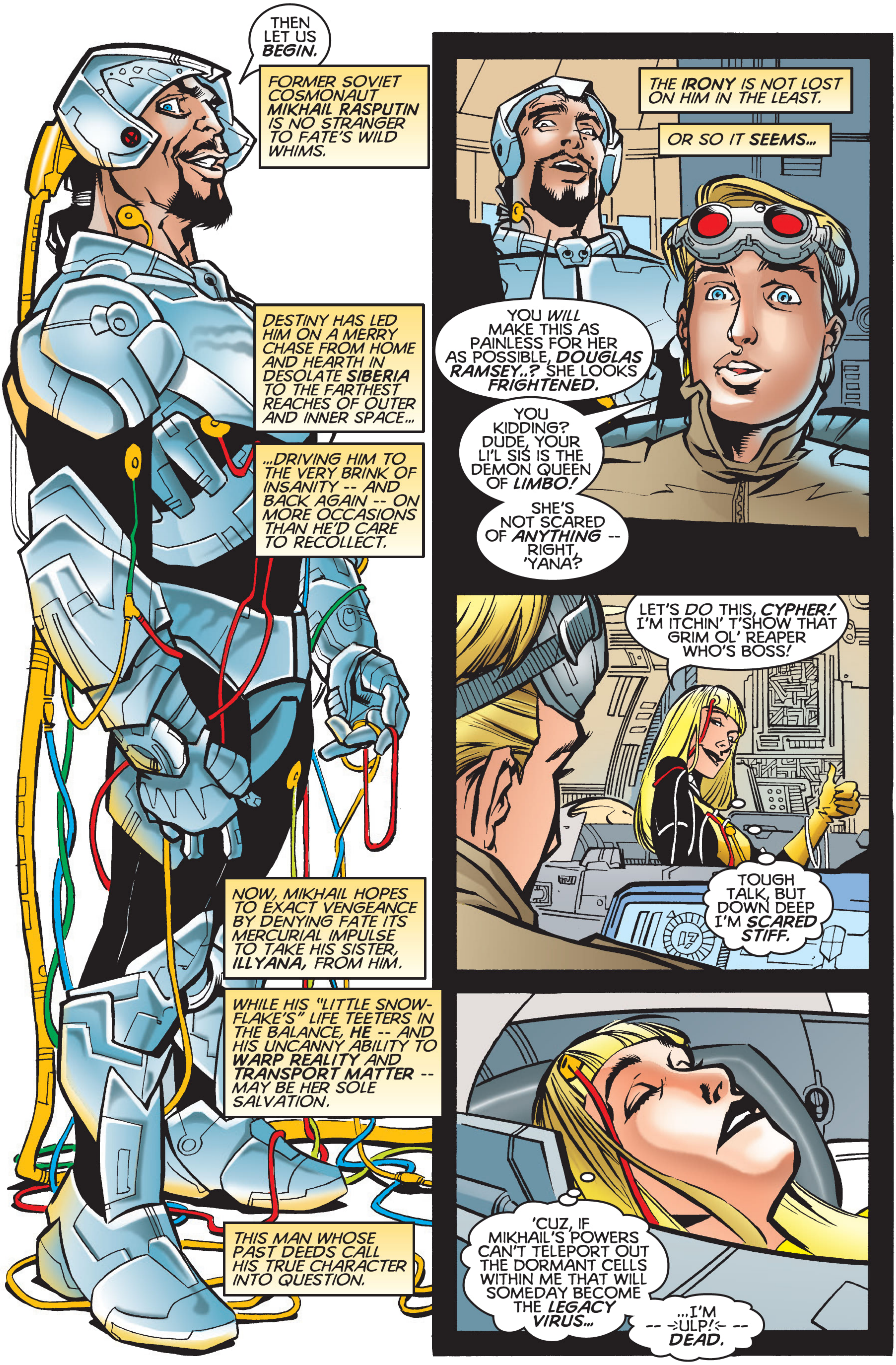
MARK P.
The DECISION!
RAAB CHANG PENNINGTON

THE STATELY XAVIER INSTITUTE IN SALEM CENTER, NEW YORK.
RENOWNED AS ONE OF THE FINEST INSTITUTES OF HIGHER LEARNING IN THE WORLD, IT CATERS TO A VERY **UNIQUE** STUDENT BODY.
FOR NOT ONLY DO ITS PUPILS HAIL FROM POINTS ALL AROUND THE WORLD, BUT THEY ARE ALSO **MUTANTS** -- ORDINARY PEOPLE BORN WITH EXTRAORDINARY POWERS.
FRIGHTENING POWERS THAT SET THEM APART FROM THEIR FELLOW HUMANS, INSPIRING IRRATIONAL **HATRED.**
WONDROUS POWERS THAT ALLOW THEM TO OVERCOME THAT HATRED, MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE FOR **HOMO SAPIENS** AND **HOMO SUPERIOR** ALIKE.
YOLK
YET, AS THESE YOUNG MUTANTS -- **EIGHT** OF WHOM HAIL FROM THE **PAST** -- ARE ABOUT TO DISCOVER, **DESPITE** THEIR EFFORTS TO SAVE THEIR ILL-FATED FRIEND, **MAGIK...**
...ALL THE POWERS IN THE WORLD ARE AS NOTHING WHEN PITTED AGAINST THE CAPRICIOUS WHIMS OF **FATE.**
ALL SYSTEMS ARE GOOD TO GO, **MIKHAIL.** READY WHEN YOU ARE...


THEN LET US *BEGIN.*
FORMER SOVIET COSMONAUT ***MIKHAIL RASPUTIN*** IS NO STRANGER TO FATE'S WILD WHIMS.
DESTINY HAS LED HIM ON A MERRY CHASE FROM HOME AND HEARTH IN DESOLATE ***SIBERIA*** TO THE FARTHEST REACHES OF OUTER AND INNER SPACE...
...DRIVING HIM TO THE VERY BRINK OF INSANITY -- AND BACK AGAIN -- ON MORE OCCASIONS THAN HE'D CARE TO RECOLLECT.
NOW, MIKHAIL HOPES TO EXACT VENGEANCE BY DENYING FATE ITS MERCURIAL IMPULSE TO TAKE HIS SISTER, **ILLYANA,** FROM HIM.
WHILE HIS "LITTLE SNOW-FLAKE'S" LIFE TEETERS IN THE BALANCE, **HE** -- AND HIS UNCANNY ABILITY TO **WARP REALITY** AND **TRANSPORT MATTER** -- MAY BE HER SOLE SALVATION.
THIS MAN WHOSE PAST DEEDS CALL HIS TRUE CHARACTER INTO QUESTION.
THE ***IRONY*** IS NOT LOST ON HIM IN THE LEAST.
OR SO IT ***SEEMS...***
YOU *WILL* MAKE THIS AS PAINLESS FOR HER AS POSSIBLE, ***DOUGLAS RAMSEY..?*** SHE LOOKS ***FRIGHTENED.***
YOU KIDDING? DUDE, YOUR LI'L SIS IS THE DEMON QUEEN OF ***LIMBO!***
SHE'S NOT SCARED OF ***ANYTHING*** -- RIGHT, 'YANA?
LET'S *DO* THIS, ***CYPHER!*** I'M ITCHIN' T'SHOW THAT GRIM OL' REAPER WHO'S BOSS!
TOUGH TALK, BUT DOWN DEEP I'M ***SCARED STIFF.***
'CUZ, IF MIKHAIL'S POWERS CAN'T TELEPORT OUT THE DORMANT CELLS WITHIN ME THAT WILL SOMEDAY BECOME THE ***LEGACY VIRUS...***
...I'M -- *ULP!* -- ***DEAD.***

RAHNE SINCLAIR **FEARS** MAGIK.
IT'S THE RESULT OF HER STAUNCH **CATHOLIC** UPBRINGING...
...A TRADITION THAT TELLS HER A BEING SUCH AS ILLYANA RASPUTIN IS PURE EVIL, SPAWNED BY SATAN HIMSELF.
CROSS YOUR FINGERS AND PRAY FOR A MIRACLE, FOLKS. IF THIS WORKS --
-- THE SCORE'S GONNA BE **NEW MUTANTS:** ONE -- **DEATH: ZIP!**
YET, REGARDLESS OF HER INDOCTRINATED FEARS AND PREJUDICE, WOLFSBANE IS STILL MAGIK'S TEAMMATE...
PLEASE, DOUGIE --
-- STOP!
...AND THE **NEW MUTANTS** ALWAYS LOOK AFTER THEIR OWN!
GRERR...
OUCH!
JEEZ LOUISE, RAHNE! LEGGO MY ARM! THERE'S NO TIME TO MESS AROUND!
I -- I JUST WANTED TO MAKE SURE EVERYTHIN'S...*uh*... PROPERLY...*um*... CALIBRATED.
ME MUM SAYS POOR CALIBRATION CAN... *er*... RUIN A GOOD EXPERIMENT!
→SIIGH←... **WARLOCK,** BUDDY -- DO WOLFSBANE A FAVOR AND REASSURE HER THAT EVERYTHING'S OKAY.
"EVERYTHING IS O.K.", SELFFRIENDRAHNE.
THERE... WERE MY DULCET VOCAL INFLECTIONS SUFFICIENTLY SOOTHING FOR YOUR HYPERSENSITIVE LUPINE EARS..?

LISTEN TO WARLOCK, *CHERIE*. ILLYANA COULD BE IN NO SAFER CARE THAN THAT OF WE WHO **LOVE** HER SO.
BUT, ***XI'AN*** -- YE KNOW WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN T'HER IN THE FUTURE! T'AIN'T ***GOD'S WILL*** F'R HER T'LIVE!
BY HELPING HER *NOW*, MIGHT WE BE ***DAMNING*** HER *LATER?*
GOD WORKS IN ***MYSTERIOUS*** WAYS, RAHNE.
AND SO MUST ***I...*** FOR NOW.
NOW, IF THERE ARE NO FURTHER OBJECTIONS, LET'S GET THIS SHOW ON THE ROAD!
SAFETY INTERLOCKS... *DEACTIVATED*. ENERGY DAMPENERS... *OFFLINE*. VIRAL CONTAINMENT SEQUENCES... *INITIATED*.
"OKAY, MIKHAIL... YOU'RE **ON!**"
I DO THIS NOT FOR ME ALONE, ILLYANINKA. I DO THIS FOR MAMA, PAPA AND DEAR BROTHER ***PIOTR***.⊗
FOR ALL THOSE WHO FAILED TO PROTECT YOU IN YOUR MOMENT OF GREATEST NEED.
THAT *SECRET*... ***TRAGIC*** MOMENT... WHEN WE REALIZE THAT WE ARE ALL VERY MUCH...
...ALONE.
A QUIET CALM WASHES OVER RASPUTIN'S MIND AS IT IGNITES HIS MUTANT TALENT.
⊗EXCALIBUR'S POWERHOUSE, COLOSSUS. --Jaye.
NEVER BEFORE HAS HE ***CHERISHED*** *THE SENSATION SO.*
FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE, HIS GENETIC GIFT PROVES NOT TO BE A GRIM HARBINGER OF DEATH...
...BUT RATHER A GLOWING HERALD OF ***LIFE!***
G-Guhhhh... nnnnnhhhh... aaaahhh...
AT LEAST, IT'S ***SUPPOSED*** *TO BE...*
AAIEEEE

ILLYANA -- NYET!!
OMIGOD! STOP THE EXPERIMENT! SHUT IT DOWN!
YOU'RE KILLING HER!
AAIEEEE!
Stan Lee PRESENTS
THE NEW MUTANTS
THEN & NOW
-- IN THE SENSE-SHATTERING CONCLUSION TO THE STRANGEST CLASS REUNION EVER!
LETTING GO
BEN RAABWRITER
BERNARD CHANG PENCILS
MARK PENNINGTON INKS
RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT LETTERS
TOM VINCENT COLORS
JAYE GARDNER EDITOR
BOB HARRAS CHIEF
BASED ON ORIGINAL CHARACTERS CREATED BY CHRIS CLAREMONT & BOB McLEOD

I'M TRYIN'! I'M TRYIN'! Oh, JEEZ! THERE GO THE INTERNAL SYSTEMS--!!!
WE'VE GOTTA GET ILLYANA OUT OF THERE... THE FEEDBACK COULD **FRY** HER BRAIN!
SQUAARK
NOT IF ***I*** HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT THAT!
MY ***LATENT TELEPATHIC ABILITIES*** HAVE FINALLY STARTED TO MANIFEST. PERHAPS THEY CAN BE OF USE IN PROTECTING ILLYANA.
"IT'S WORKING -- THE PSIONIC FEEDBACK IS RECEDING!
"BUT WHAT EFFECT DID IT HAVE ON MAGIK'S MIND...
"...AND HER ***FATE?***"
IF THIS FIRE SPREADS TO THE REST OF THE MED-LAB --
-- ILLYANA'S DANGER WILL BE DOUBLY GRAVE!
HSSSSSSSS
THEREFORE, IT SHALL ***NOT.***
EXCELLENT, ***MAGMA!***
I-IS SHE... I-IS SHE...
...GONE..?

Y-YOU W-w-WISH...
BEEN THE DEVIL'S... PLAYTHING... F'R HALF... M'SUPERNATURAL LIFE, KIDDO.
GONNA TAKE... MORE'N SOME FUNNY... LIGHTSHOW... T'GET THE BEST... O' M-ME --
-- UHHNNN...
HUSH, LITTLE ONE.
THOUGH YOUR BRAVADO WOULD CAUSE EVEN THE WHITE WOLF TO TREMBLE IN HIS TRACKS, NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR BOASTS...
...NOW IS THE TIME FOR ACTION!
TO THE I.C.U., CHILDREN!
"IMMEDIATELY!"
KLUNK
YOU HEARD THE MAN, TEAM! WASTE ANOTHER SECOND -- AND ILLYANA'S HISTORY!
LET'S MOVE!
AND SO THE NEW MUTANTS FROM THE PAST RACE AGAINST TIME IN THE PRESENT TO ALTER THE PROSPECT OF THEIR FRIEND'S DISMAL FUTURE.
WELL, NOT ALL OF THEM...
LORD, I BEG YUIR FORGIVENESS FOR WHAT I'M ABOUT T'DO.
IF ONLY THERE WAS SOME OTHER WAY...

MEANWHILE, IN THE ELECTROMAGNETICALLY-SEALED SUB-BASEMENT DETENTION BLOCK...
...THE NEW MUTANTS' PRESENT-DAY COUNTERPARTS --
-- LAID LOW BY ONE OF THEIR OWN FOR INTERFERING WITH THEIR TEMPORALLY-DISPLACED SELVES' RESCUE MISSION...⊗
...REEL FROM THE AFTERSHOCKS OF A PARTICULARLY NASTY PSIONIC HANGOVER!
Uhhhh...
⊗KARMA TURNED TRAITOR AND PUT THE WHAMMY ON HER PALS LAST ISH. -- Jaye
NAP TIME'S *hff!* -- OVER Y'ALL. TIME TA -- *uhf!* -- GIT UP!
JEEZ, MOONSTAR -- WHAT THE HECK DID THOSE *MLF* CREEPS FEED YA?
SURE PACKED ON SOME SERIOUS *"LBS"* WORKIN' *UNDERCOVER,* GIRL!
FUNNY, GUTHRIE -- BUT NOW'S NO TIME T'BE TAKIN' POTSHOTS AT YER COMATOSE EX-TEAMMATES.
BETTER T'BE USIN' YER SKILLS AS AN *X-MAN* T'GET US ALL OUT O' THIS MESS!
Hmm... HOW WOULD *CYCLOPS* HANDLE A *SNAFU* LIKE THIS?

MY GUESS IS WE'VE BEEN DUMPED IN ONE OF THE CONTAINMENT CELLS.
ONE WAY IN, ONE WAY OUT... AND ENOUGH JUICE T'FRY *SABRETOOTH.*
GET TOO CLOSE AND *WHAMMO!*
FRENCH FRIED FLESH.
BZZZZ
OF COURSE, NOT ALL O' US BURN SO EASILY...
DOUGLOCK'S ALIEN *TECHNO-ORGANIC COMPOSITION* GIVES HIM A MUCH DENSER, MORE RESILIENT SHELL THAN PLAIN OL' HUMAN SKIN...
...NOT T'MENTION THE FACT THAT HIS CYBERNETIC MIND CAN JACK INTO THE ALARM MATRIX AN' DEACTIVATE THE ELECTRO-LOCKS.
'COURSE, AH'M GONNA NEED T'*JUMP-START* 'IM FIRST.
UPSY DAISY, 'LOCK -- IT'S *HERO* TIME!
A LITTLE ELECTRO-MAGNETIC *"ALKA SELTZER"* WILL HAVE YA BACK UP T'SPEED LICKETY-SPLIT!
CAREFUL NOW... RAHNE'D KILL ME IF SHE FOUND OUT AH *ELECTROCUTED* HER NEW *BOYFRIEND.*
SURE, WOLFSBANE USEDTA HAVE A THANG F'R ME. BUT THAT'S ANCIENT HISTORY NOW.
THIS E.T.'s HER BEAU NOW -- OR SO IT SEEMS.
GEE, GUTHRIE -- *JEALOUS..?*
OR, D'YA JUST MISS TABITHA THAT MUCH..?⊗
⊗X-FORCE's "MELTDOWN". --J.

YIIIIKES!
WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU TRYING TO DO, SAMUEL?
ELECTROCUTE ME?
NO, AH WAS JUST TRYIN' TO --*Huh?!* YOU'RE *CONSCIOUS?*
DON'T TELL ME YA WUZ ***PLAYIN' POSSUM*** ALL ALONG?
WHY, YES. OF COURSE. BEING UNCONSCIOUS SEEMED THE THING TO DO AT THE TIME.
I MEAN, *EVERYONE* ELSE WAS DOING IT.
SIGH...
LOOK, JUST HELP ME WAKE THE OTHERS. LORD KNOWS WHAT MIGHT'VE HAPPENED WHILE WE WERE OUT.
SIR! YES, SIR!
C'MON, CHEYENNE... UP AN' AT 'EM.
MUCH AS AH'D LIKE T'THINK OTHERWISE, AH CAN'T DO THIS WITHOUT YA.
SAVING ILLYANA FROM THE LEGACY VIRUS BEFORE SHE EVER CONTRACTED IT WOULDN'T JUST *RE-WRITE* HISTORY -- IT'LL TOTALLY WARP THE PRESENT!
AND WHILE THAT'S A BONUS FOR *SOME* O' US...
...IT WOULD TOTALLY ***BOGART*** THINGS FOR OTHERS.

THE I.C.U.
I -- I JUST DON'T GET IT, MIKHAIL. MY MYSTICAL ARMOR...MY **SOUL-SWORD**...SHOULD'VE PROTECTED ME.
IT *ALWAYS* PROTECTS ME.
I DO NOT KNOW WHY IT **BETRAYED** YOU, SISTER.
BUT REST ASSURED THAT ***I*** WILL NOT.
I WILL DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO HELP YOU.
I KNOW, BROTHER. WITH YOU BY MY SIDE, NO *REAL* HARM CAN COME TO ME.
I'M SO GLAD I'M FINALLY GETTING TO KNOW YOU, MIKHAIL. PIOTR ALWAYS THOUGHT THE WORLD OF YOU, BUT YOU LEFT FOR THE STARS BEFORE I WAS BORN.
PRAY, TELL ME SOMETHING OF YOUR ***ADVENTURES...***
AT *HIS SISTER'S BEHEST, MIKHAIL'S FRACTURED MIND SETS SAIL UPON A TEMPESTUOUS SEA OF MEMORY.*
FROM THE MOMENT OF HIS LIBERATION FROM THE ***VOID*** *OF ANOTHER REALITY...*
...TO HIS OWN PART IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SUBTERRANEAN-DWELLING MUTANTS KNOWN AS THE ***MORLOCKS...***
UXM #286
UXM #293
-- JAYE

...TO THE INSTANT WHEN THE X-MAN, **STORM,** NEARLY TOOK HIS LIFE AS RECOMPENSE FOR ALL THOSE HE HIMSELF HAD TAKEN ON TWO WORLDS.⊗
⊗STORM LIMITED SERIES #1-4. -- Jaye
AND THOUGH HE WOULD GRANT HER THE WORLD WERE IT HIS TO GIVE, MIKHAIL RASPUTIN **DENIES** HIS SISTER'S REQUEST.
NO, LITTLE SNOWFLAKE. CLOSE YOUR EYES. REST.
BUT YOU WILL STAY HERE -- WITH DEAR BROTHER PIOTR AND THE X-MEN -- WHILE I RECOVER...
...*WON'T* YOU?
HE KNOWS NOT WHAT TO SAY. PARTLY FOR FEAR OF HER REACTION TO THE SINS OF HIS PAST SHOULD HE CONFESS THEM.
I THINK IT BEST I RETURN TO MOTHER RUSSIA...
NO, MIKHAIL! *STAY* HERE -- WITH ME.
PLEASE..?
PARTLY FOR FEAR OF HER REALIZING THE PLAIN AND SIMPLE TRUTH THAT HER BROTHER -- REGARDLESS OF THIS ACT OF **PENANCE...**
Shh, MY PRECIOUS. I'M WITH YOU.
...IS NOW AND FOREVERMORE...
UNTIL THE VERY ***END.***
...A **VILLAIN** TO THE CORE.

IN AN ADJACENT WAITING ROOM...
THIS IS ALL *MY* FAULT.
ILLYANA'S GOING TO DIE... AND IT'S ALL *MY FAULT.*
SHUCKS...DON'T SAY THAT, DANI. WE CAN'T GIVE UP YET.
MAGIK'S A TROOPER. SHE'LL PULL THROUGH. I *HOPE*...
CANNONBALL'S RIGHT. I MEAN, *MADONNA MIA* --
-- WHAT THREAT IS SOME *DISEASE* TO A GIRL WHO COMMANDS THE VERY HORDES OF HELL?!
JEEZ, BOBBY! WERE YOU EVEN *LISTENING* TO WHAT OUR FUTURE SELVES SAID ABOUT THAT LEGACY VIRUS?
IT *KILLS* MUTANTS!
RIGHT, NO MATTER HOW WEAK OR STRONG.
SO, HOW IS THAT *YER* FAULT?
I'M *CO-TEAM LEADER.* IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO ANY ONE OF US--?
-- *I* FEEL LIKE I SHOULDER THE BLAME.
NOT ALONE, THOUGH.
TRUE. YOU MIGHT FEEL LIKE YOUR LOVED ONE'S SUFFERING COULD HAVE BEEN PREVENTED HAD YOU DONE SOMETHING DIFFERENT...
...AND THAT YER INABILITY T'PREDICT AND PREVENT THE INEVITABLE MAKES YA UNQUALIFIED TO BE HEAD HONCHO OF OUR LI'L *FAMILY* HERE...
...BUT YA COULDN'T BE ANY FARTHER OFF THE MARK. WHY, AH'D FOLLOW YER LEAD T'HELL AN' BACK, CHEYENNE.
ANY DAY!
Oh GEEZ, YA DUMB HAYSEED...
...DIDJA HAVETA -- *SNIFF!* -- GO AN' MAKE ME *CRY*..?

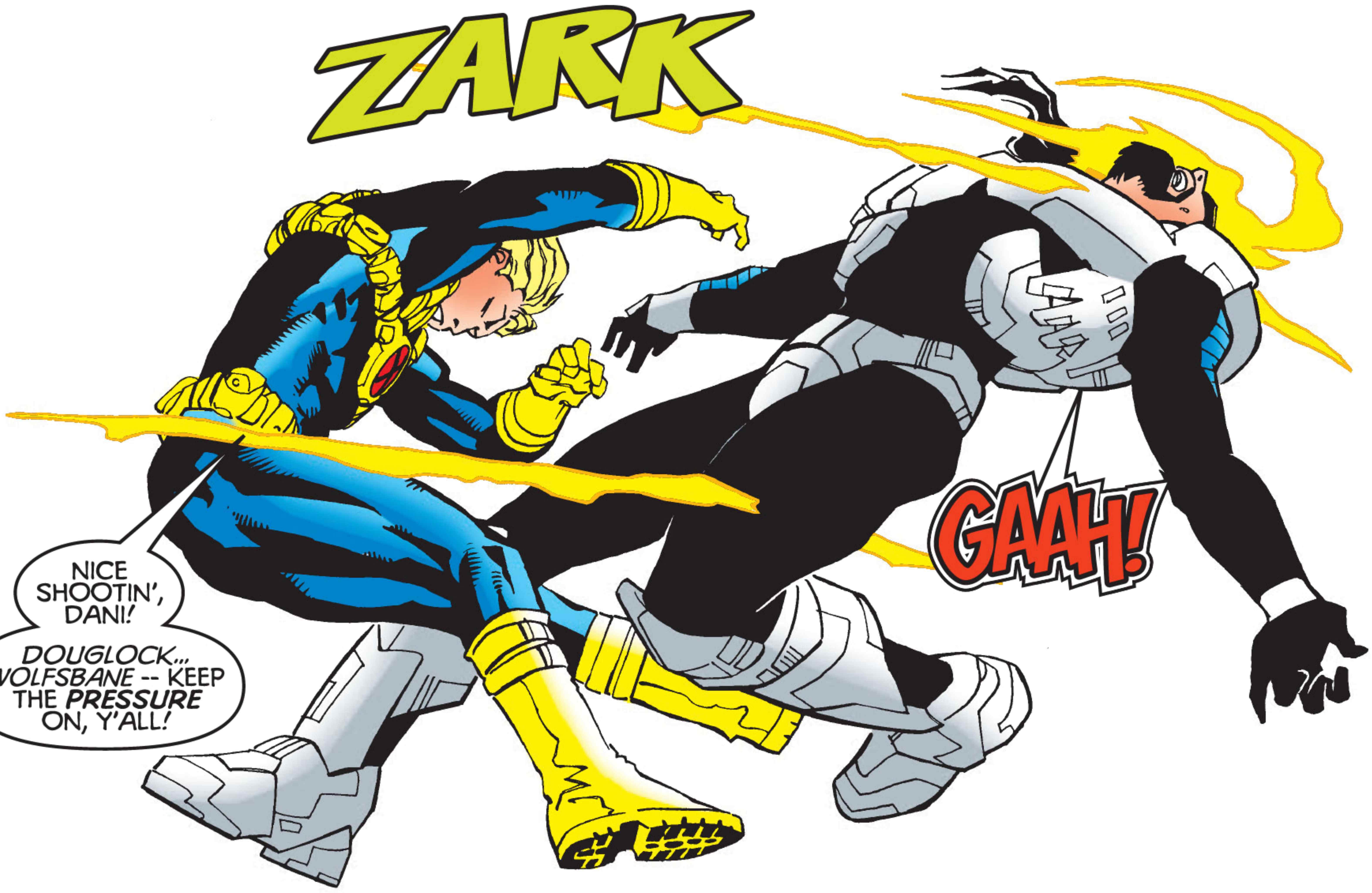
SO, Mr. RASPUTIN -- WHAT'S THE *PROGNOSIS?* SHE GONNA MAKE IT?
SHE IS WEAK. IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME TO RECOVER HER STRENGTH.
BUT AS FAR AS THE...Um... *INITIAL* READINGS INDICATE, HER BODY IS *FREE* OF THE VIRUS.
THE OPERATION WAS A *SUCCESS.*
WOO-HOO! DIDJA HEAR THAT, DANI?
THAT'S SO *AWESOME!*
SELF IS SO HAPPY, SELF JUST MIGHT SECRETE LIQUID FROM SELF'S EYES!
YOLK
Oh, DOUGLAS... WHAT A -- *SNIFF!* -- *MIRACLE* THIS IS!
I'LL SAY...
SOMETHING AIN'T KOSHER HERE. NO LIFE-SAVING PROCEDURE THAT COMPLEX IS THIS NEAT AND TIDY.
TIME TO PUT THE OL' *HACKER* SKILLS TO USE...
BEG PARDON, MICKEY.
AND WHERE ARE *YOU* GOING, RAMSEY?
I...*Uh*... FORGOT SOMETHING INSIDE. BE RIGHT BACK.

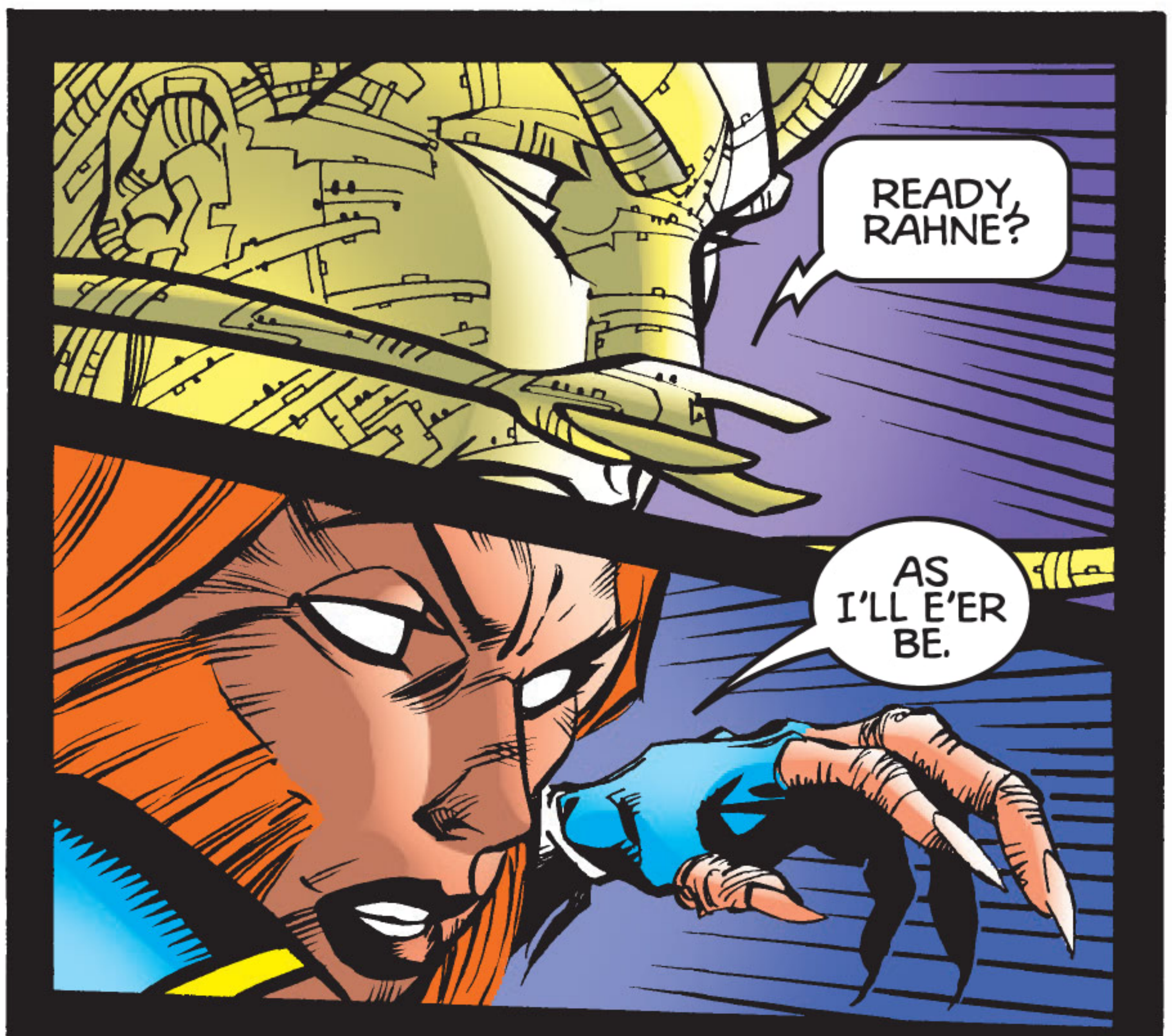
WHAT'CHA DOIN', DOUG? I THOUGHT I WAS *CLEAN..?*
JUST A ROUTINE DOUBLE CHECK OF YOUR BIO-STATS. NO BIGGIE.
YUP. I WAS RIGHT. HERE'S ILLYANA'S ***"PRE-OP"*** GENETIC STRUCTURE...FREE AND CLEAR OF ANY MALIGNANCIES.
AND NOW HERE'S THAT SAME PATTERN "POST-OP"...BUT *MUTATED* IN FOUR ***KEY*** PLACES.
tek tek tek
HOW..? UNLESS ILLYANA WAS NEVER INFECTED WITH THE LEGACY VIRUS TO BEGIN WITH..?
tek tek tek
THEN, THAT WOULD MEAN MIKHAIL'S... HE COULDN'T... HE WOULDN'T... Oh MY GOD, THIS IS UNBELIEVABLE...
...BUT HE MIGHT'VE INFECTED HIS OWN SISTER!
THERE'S GOTTA BE MORE INFO IN HERE. GOTTA BURROW DEEPER INTO THE FILES AND SEE WHAT I CAN DIG --
-- UP.
JEEZ, RAMSEY -- TURN A ***WHITER*** SHADE OF PALE, WHY DON'TCHA?!
WHAT'S WRONG..? I MAY FEEL AWFUL, BUT YOU LOOK LIKE ***DEATH*** WARMED OVER!
MAYBE, MAGIK...
RAMSEY, DOUGLAS: D
...THAT'S BECAUSE I ***AM.***

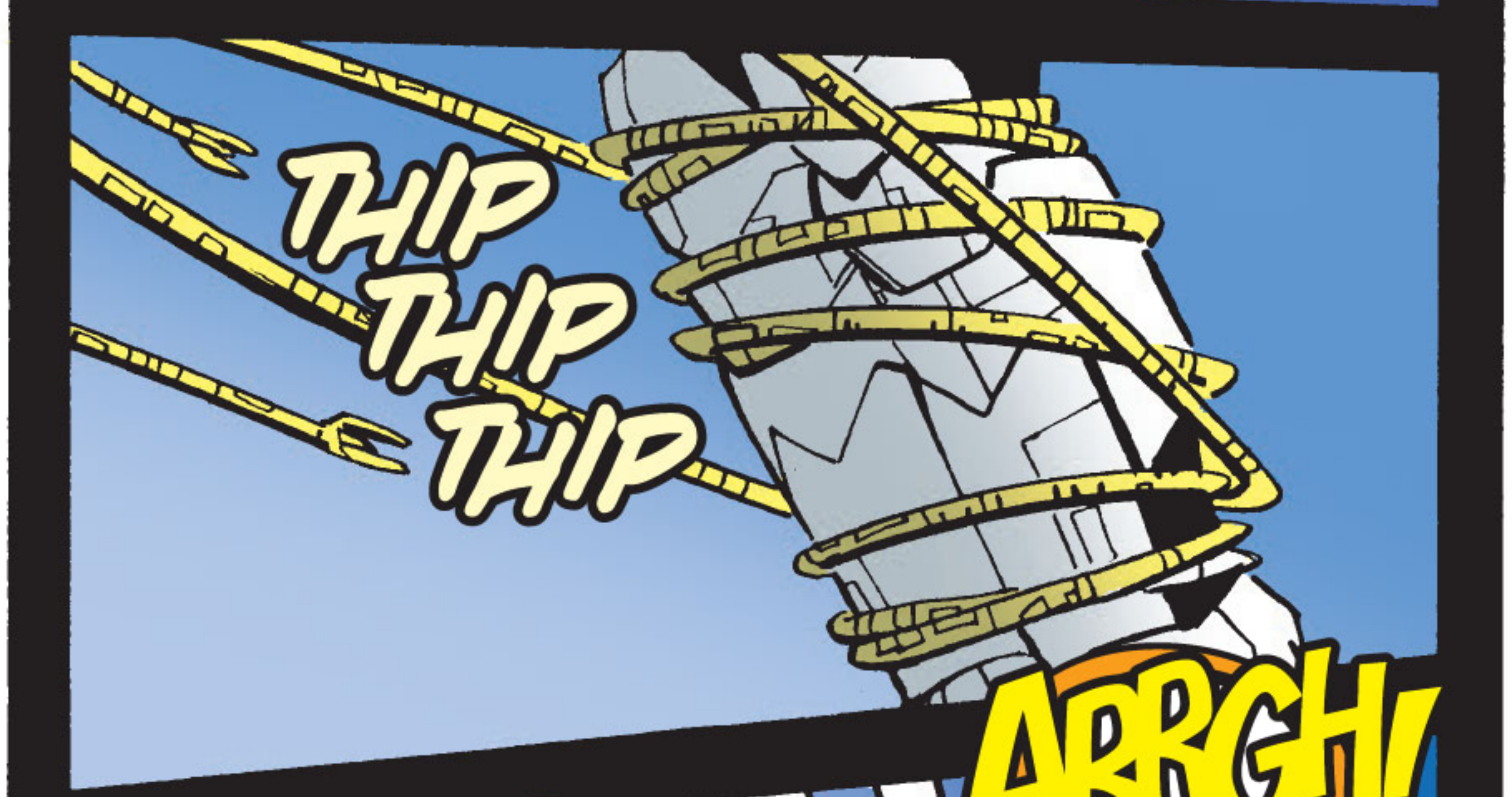
HEY, HAS ANYONE SEEN WHERE RAHNE'S GOTTEN OFF TO?
AH KNOW THERE AIN'T NO LOVE LOST 'TWEEN HER AN' MAGIK --
-- BUT AH THOUGHT SHE'D AT LEAST WANNA CELEBRATE THE GOOD NEWS WITH US...
THOUGH SHE WOULD INDEED BE HAPPY TO HEAR OF ILLYANA'S VICTORY OVER DESTINY...
...RAHNE SINCLAIR CAN'T IGNORE HER NAGGING FEELING THAT THIS IS ALL WRONG.
AND SO SHE QUICKLY MAKES HER WAY THROUGH THE MANSION'S SUBTERRANEAN CORRIDORS, FIRST AS A **WOLF**...
...THEN IN HER TRANSITIONAL LYCANTHROPE FORM...
...AND FINALLY AS A TEENAGE HUMAN GIRL, WITH BUT ONE THOUGHT IN MIND:
GOTTA FREE OUR FUTURE SELVES AN' PUT AN END T'THIS MADNESS BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
AT LEAST, THAT'S HER **GOAL.**
BUT AT THE MOMENT SHE TRIES TO DISABLE THE SECURITY LOCKS...
SHAZOW
AIEE!
NOT SO FAST, GIRL.

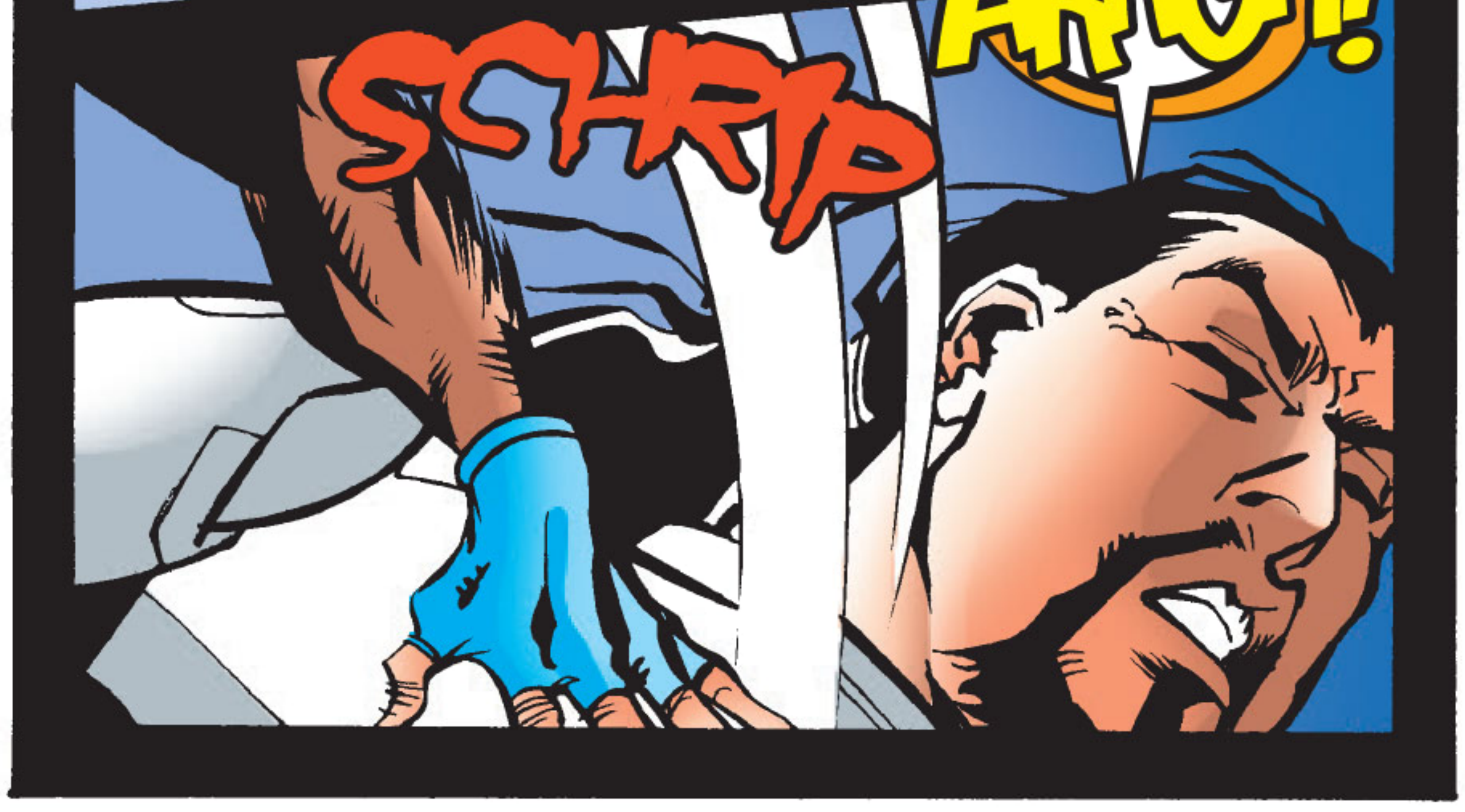
CLEVER, CHILD...BUT NOT CLEVER *ENOUGH.*
YOUR PRESENT DAY COUNTERPARTS MIGHT HAVE GIVEN ME PAUSE HAD YOU LIBERATED THEM IN TIME...
...BUT IT'S TOO LATE NOW. THIS *GAME* IS ***OVER!***
THANKS TO MY SISTER, I AM AT LAST FREE OF MY AFFLICTION...
...AND SOON, SO SHE SHALL BE, TOO!
TSSSSSSS
Eh..?
YE'RE RIGHT, MIKHAIL. THE GAME *IS* OVER...
"...AND YE'RE THE ***LOSER!***"
OKAY, GANG. TIME T'KICK IT OL' SCHOOL...
WHOOOM
Y'ALL KNOW THE PLAN. HIT 'IM *HARD*...HIT 'IM *FAST* --
-- *AND LET'S TAKE THAT MAN DOWN*
NEW MUTANTS-STYLE!

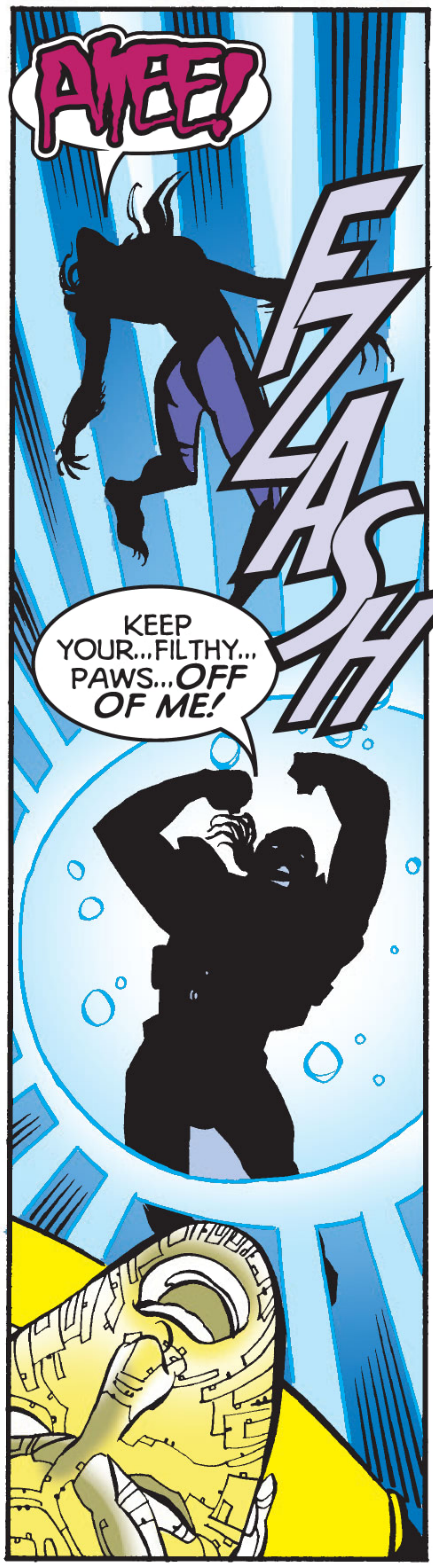
A LITTLE SOLAR ENERGY TO TAG THIS LUNATIC *HIGH...*
ARRGH!
WHOULF!
...A MEGA-COMBUSTION-POWERED SACKING *LOW* --
-- AND THIS BATTLE IS OVER, LADIES AND GENTLE-MEN!
BOOM
Huh..? WHAT THE--?!
FOOLISH BOY! YOU FORGET THE NATURE OF MY OWN POWERS.
WITH BUT A THOUGHT, I CAN TURN YOUR OWN *BLAST FIELD* AGAINST YOU!
YEEEARGH!
LEGGO O' HIM, RASPUTIN! *NOW!*
SAM CAN'T TAKE THAT KINDA PUNISHMENT FOR LONG. ONE SHOT'S ALL I'VE GOT.
O' GREAT SPIRITS -- LET MY *AIM* BE *TRUE...*
FFIP

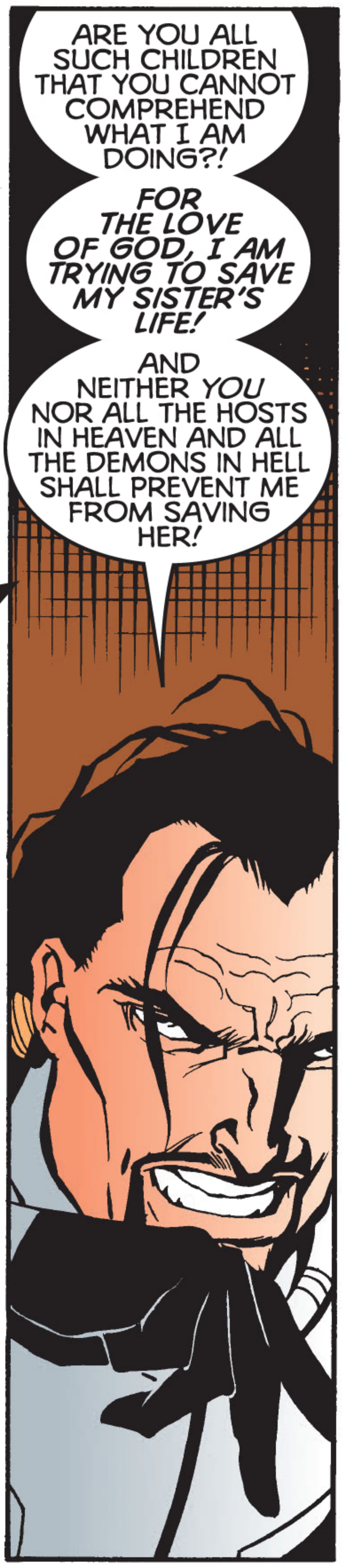

ZARK
GAAH!
NICE SHOOTIN', DANI!
DOUGLOCK... WOLFSBANE -- KEEP THE ***PRESSURE*** ON, Y'ALL!


READY, RAHNE?
AS I'LL E'ER BE.


THIP THIP THIP


ARRGH!
SCHRIP


AIEEE!
FFZLASH
KEEP YOUR...FILTHY... PAWS...***OFF OF ME!***

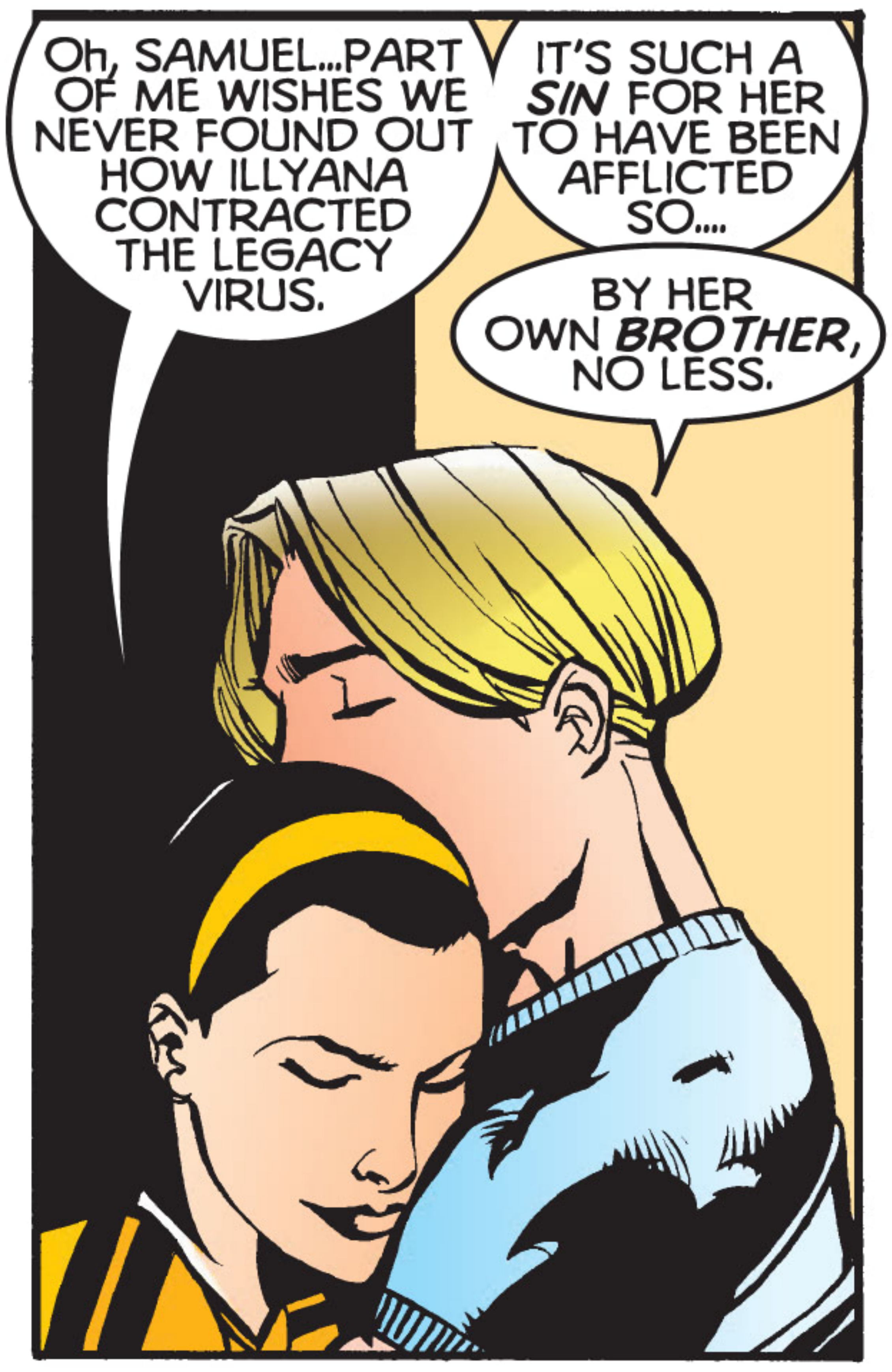

ARE YOU ALL SUCH CHILDREN THAT YOU CANNOT COMPREHEND WHAT I AM DOING?!
FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, I AM TRYING TO SAVE MY SISTER'S LIFE!
AND NEITHER *YOU* NOR ALL THE HOSTS IN HEAVEN AND ALL THE DEMONS IN HELL SHALL PREVENT ME FROM SAVING HER!

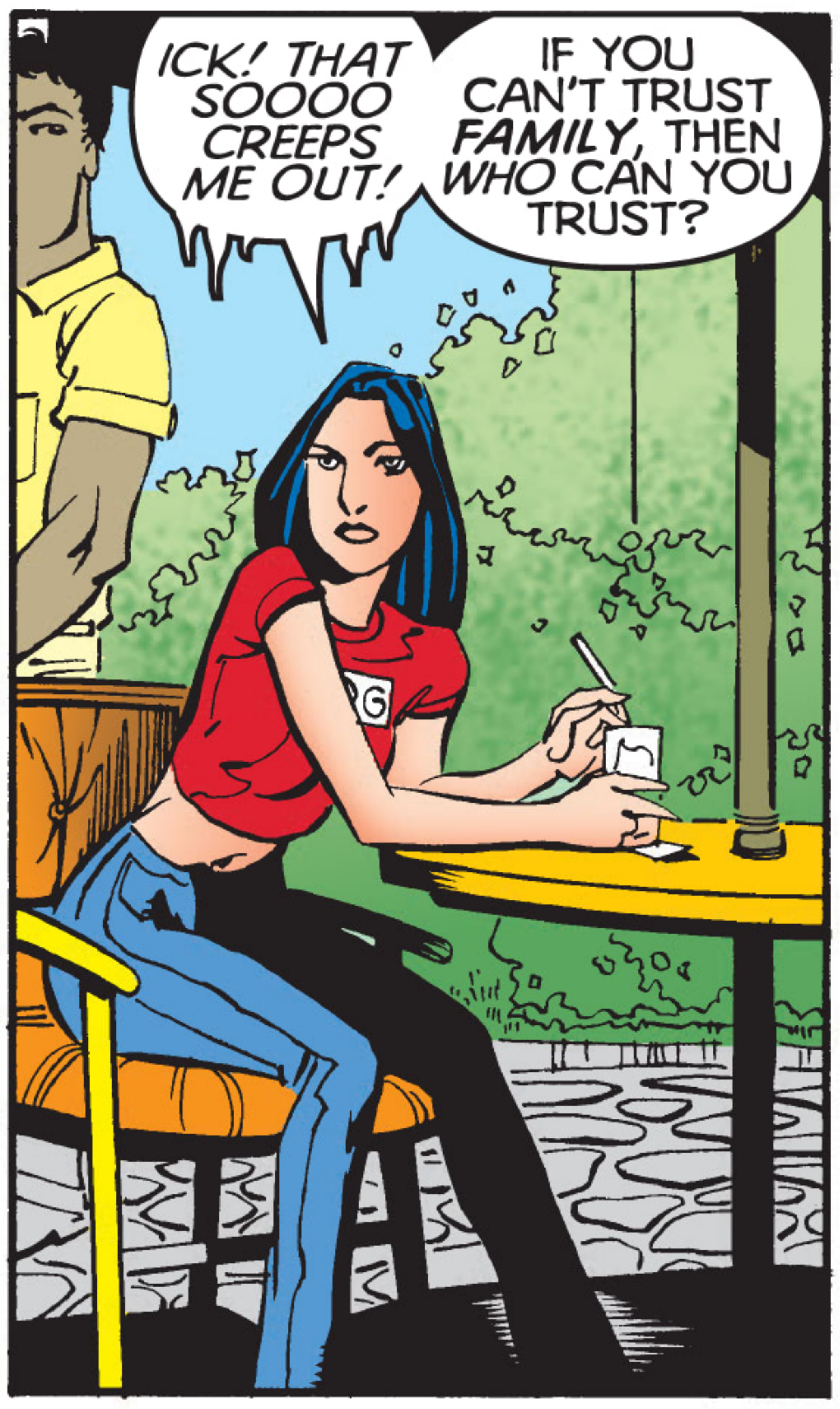
WANNA BET?
ILLYANA, MY L-LITTLE S-SNOWFLAKE -- WHAT ARE YOU DOING? I HAVE *CURED* YOU...
DON'T *"LITTLE SNOWFLAKE"* ME, BUSTER. YOU'VE CURED ME OF NOTHING!
YOU'VE **CONDEMNED** ME!
TELL 'IM, RAMSEY...
YOU *ASSUMED* MAGIK'S MYSTICALLY-ALTERED BODY WOULD DEVELOP AN IMMUNITY THAT HER FUTURE, DE-AGED SELF COULDN'T.
SO YOU INFECTED HER WITH A ***PLAGUE*** YOU THOUGHT SHE COULD HANDLE. A PLAGUE YOUR OWN BODY ***COULDN'T.***
BEFORE TODAY, ILLYANA WASN'T CURSED WITH THE LEGACY VIRUS...
...**YOU** WERE!
FOR ONCE IN MY MISBEGOTTEN LIFE, I WANTED TO DO SOME ***GOOD.*** TO *HELP,* INSTEAD OF *HURT.*
I FAILED.
DEAR SISTER -- CAN YOU...WILL YOU... EVER ***FORGIVE*** ME?
I HOPE YOU ***BURN*** IN HELL.
SO BE IT.
PERHAPS I WILL SEE YOU *THERE.*
SOMEDAY...
FZASH

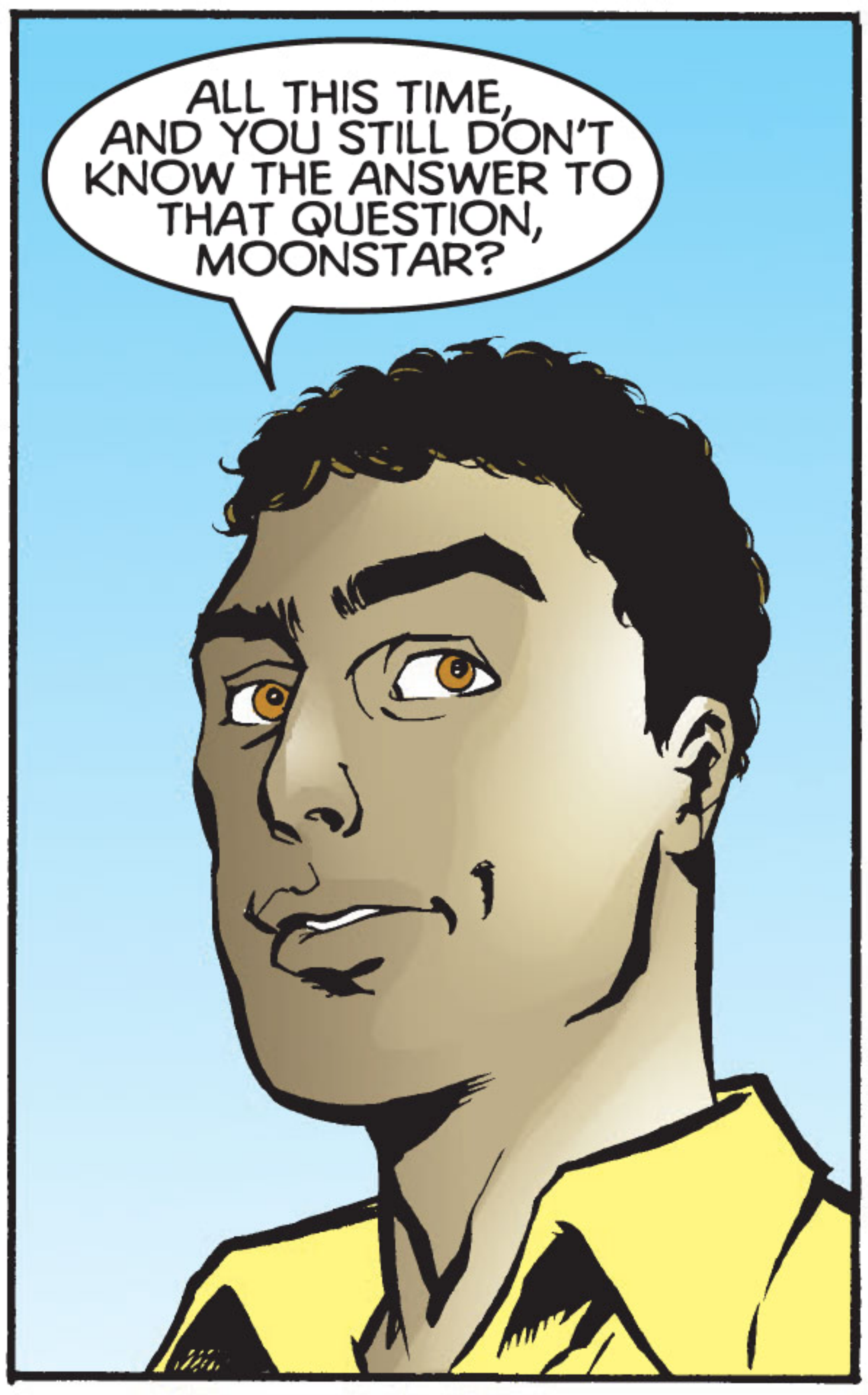
YEAH...
...SOMEDAY...
SHORTLY AFTER COMES THE INEVITABLE TIME TO SAY "GOOD-BYE."
THOUGH THIS STRANGE REUNION HAS PROVEN AN ENLIGHTENING EXPERIENCE FOR ALL...
...THE ILLUMINATION SHINES SIGNIFICANTLY LESS BRIGHT FOR SOME.
BE BRAVE, M' FRIENDS. THE FUTURE'S NAE SET IN STONE, Y'KNOW.
SORRY, RAHNE, BUT FOR SOME OF US..?
I'M AFRAID IT IS...

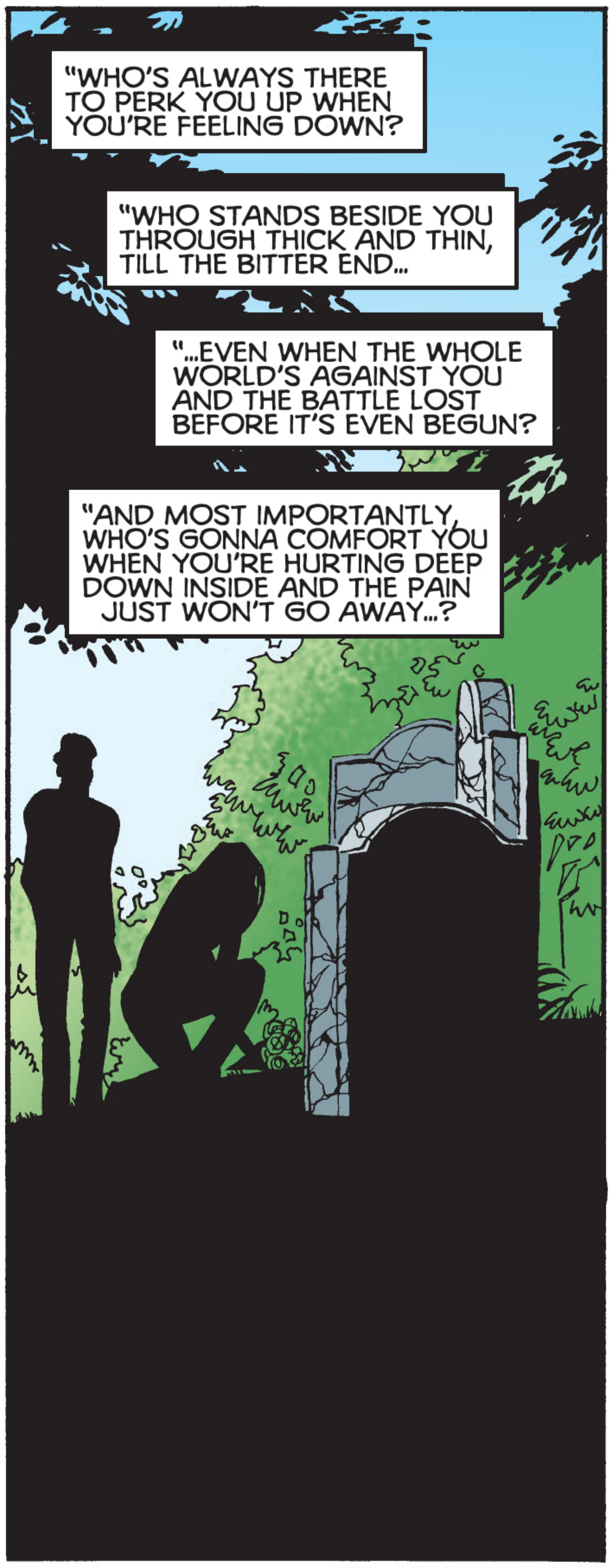
THEN MAYBE YE SHOULD HOLD ON T'THESE MEMORIES..?
MAYBE IF YE *REMEMBER* WHAT HAPPENED HERE, YE'LL BE ABLE TO FIND A CURE FOR THE LEGACY VIRUS IN THE PAST SO THAT NO ONE NEED SUFFER FROM IT IN THE FUTURE.
I DON'T THINK SO, SINCLAIR. THIS IS THE *LAST* DAY I EVER WANT TO REMEMBER.
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME -- I HAVE A LIFE TO GET BACK TO...
...WHATEVER'S LEFT OF IT.
C'EST FINI.
THE INCESSANT... *Uhhhuh*... *RINGING* IN MY HEAD TESTIFIES THAT I HAVE SUCCESSFULLY PSI-WIPED OUR PAST SELVES' MINDS OF THESE EVENTS.
AS WE DID WHEN THEY FIRST ARRIVED, THEY NOW POSSESS NO RECOLLECTION OF EVER BEING IN THE PRESENT WITH US.
I ASSUME WE SAVED THE TIMESTREAM.
WOULD THAT WE COULD HAVE SAVED OUR *FRIEND,* AS WELL...

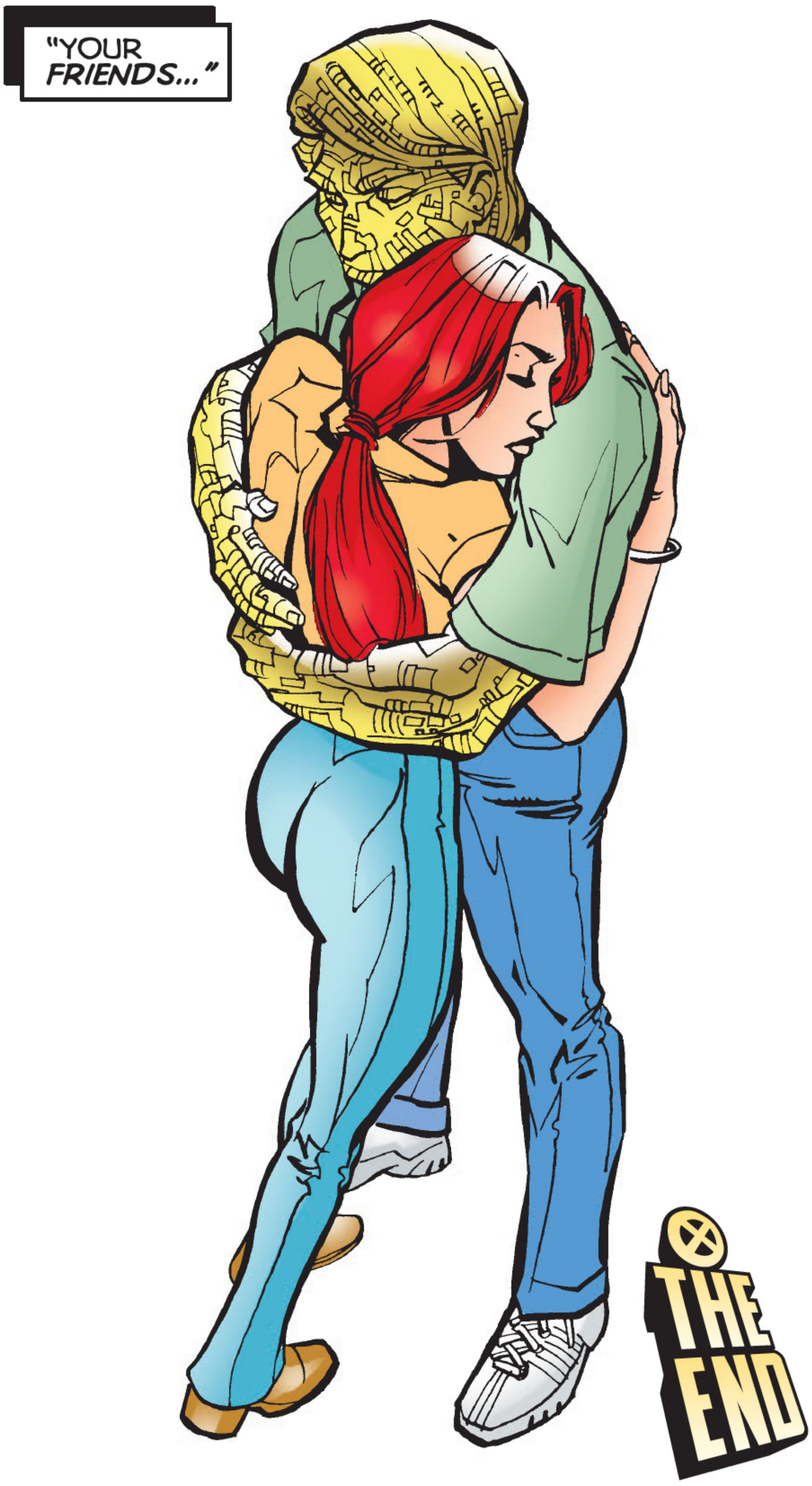
IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A QUIET WEEKEND SPENT REMINISCING ABOUT OLD TIMES.
XAV
INST
A CHANCE TO CATCH UP WITH ABSENT FRIENDS, LONG MISSED.
INDEED, IT WAS... ALBEIT NOT IN THE WAY ANYONE EXPECTED.
NO ONE KNEW THEY'D BE FORCED TO FACE ONE OF THE GREATEST SPECTERS FROM THEIR SHARED PAST COME BACK TO HAUNT THEM ANEW...
...OR THAT THEY'D HAVE TO MAKE THE PAINFUL CHOICE WHETHER OR NOT TO GRANT THAT GHOST A CHANCE TO LIVE AGAIN, POTENTIALLY ALTERING HISTORY FOREVER.
YET, THEY MADE THEIR CHOICE... THE **RIGHT** CHOICE. THE **PAINFUL** CHOICE.
NOW, WITH THEIR REUNION WEEKEND AT ITS END, THE NEW MUTANTS SURVIVING IN THE PRESENT MUST DEAL WITH THEIR PAIN...
...LET GO OF THE HURT...
...AND PRAY THE ACHING SOON SUBSIDES.
YER NOT *STILL* FLIPPIN' THROUGH THAT ***PHOTO ALBUM*** O' US AS KIDS..?


Oh, SAMUEL...PART OF ME WISHES WE NEVER FOUND OUT HOW ILLYANA CONTRACTED THE LEGACY VIRUS.
IT'S SUCH A *SIN* FOR HER TO HAVE BEEN AFFLICTED SO....
BY HER OWN ***BROTHER***, NO LESS.


ICK! THAT SOOOO CREEPS ME OUT!
IF YOU CAN'T TRUST ***FAMILY***, THEN *WHO* CAN YOU TRUST?


ALL THIS TIME, AND YOU STILL DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION, MOONSTAR?


"WHO'S ALWAYS THERE TO PERK YOU UP WHEN YOU'RE FEELING DOWN?
"WHO STANDS BESIDE YOU THROUGH THICK AND THIN, TILL THE BITTER END...
"...EVEN WHEN THE WHOLE WORLD'S AGAINST YOU AND THE BATTLE LOST BEFORE IT'S EVEN BEGUN?
"AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, WHO'S GONNA COMFORT YOU WHEN YOU'RE HURTING DEEP DOWN INSIDE AND THE PAIN JUST WON'T GO AWAY...?


"YOUR *FRIENDS...*"
THE END